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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MUSCAT 000552

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/ARPI, DRL

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TAGS: [PINS](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [KISL](#) [PHUM](#) [KJUS](#) [PINR](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: SULTAN'S SECURITY CHIEF ON ARRESTS OF IBADHI CONSPIRATORS

REF: A. MUSCAT 175

[1](#)B. MUSCAT 231

Classified By: Ambassador Richard L. Baltimore III.
Reason: 1.4 (b).

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) The Minister of the Royal Office and one of the most powerful men in the country, General Ali bin Majid al-Ma'amari told the Ambassador that forty people have been arrested for conspiring to overthrow the government in order to resurrect an Ibadhi religious state in the interior. The Minister asserted that all legal requirements were met in the course of the arrests and mocked the notion that the Omani people would accept a formal political and religious division of the Sultanate. The conspirators, he insisted, represent a small and entirely indigenous grouping with no ties, support or links with any outsiders. He was firm in asserting that the security forces have a good handle on and will swiftly respond to any challenge to the current order, whether from Ibadhis or any other sect. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) On the heels of a meeting with the visiting Yemeni Minister of Interior, Omani Minister of the Royal Office General Ali bin Majid al-Ma'amari (aka Ali Majid) seized an opportunity to meet briefly with the Ambassador on April 4, [1](#)2005. Ali Majid wanted to address forthrightly reason behind the arrests that have taken place during the past months in Oman. (Note: The Royal Office is a conglomeration of our NSC, CIA, and White House Staff. It also directly controls Oman's foreign intelligence, the Sultan's Special Forces and, indirectly, the Internal Security Service. End note.)

WHO, HOW AND WHY?

[1](#)3. (C) Ali Majid asserted that forty persons were arrested in connection with a plot to overthrow the government and resurrect the religious-based Imamate dissolved in 1954. He repeatedly stressed that those in custody were all Ibadhis with no/no links with any foreign organization or personality. (Note: Saudi Arabia had aided Imamate forces in the 1950's. End note.) He opined that although Omanis are free to express their opinion as they see fit, whether in the press or in Internet chatrooms, it would be "intolerable" to allow a group to plot against the government. He rhetorically asked whether they saw merit in attempting to imitate Al-Houthi in Yemen, Saudi extremists or the Iranian revolutionaries by attempting to turn back the clock? Did they really think that the Omani people would tolerate the imposition of social strictures such as forbidding women to drive? Did they believe it would be beneficial to all to allow a division of the country into two again, and perhaps into even more parts later? To demonstrate his point of how far off the mark they are, he noted that the Sultan's annual tour into the interior was longer than usual and that he (Ali Majid) personally witnessed a high level of popular enthusiasm and respect for the Sultan throughout His Majesty's recent travels.

[1](#)4. (C) Ali Majid insisted that notwithstanding foreign press reports to the contrary, all arrests were made after obtaining search warrants from a court, women were present if a female was taken into custody, a relative or friend of the family was always with the authorities during a search and signed a statement that it had been conducted properly and that no unrelated items were seized, and that those in custody have a right to legal representation. The future of the arrested, he said, is now in the hands of the courts.

[1](#)5. (C) In response to a question from the Ambassador, the General said that the Omani who shot a British citizen in Muscat on September 26, 2004, was mentally deranged and dismissed it as "a matter for the police."

[1](#)6. (C) The Minister placed great emphasis on "the lesson" the arrests have shown i.e., the Omani authorities will treat all citizens alike whether Ibadhi, Sunni or belonging to any

other religious persuasion.

Comment

17. (C) Comment: As reported previously, the Minister of Information made a fool of himself when he broke the official silence and tried to respond to growing international press reports that alleged hundreds of arrests (ref A). The Foreign Ministry subsequently tried to calm the waters (ref B), but with limited effect. Ali Majid, one of the most powerful members of the cabinet, seized this chance to assure the Ambassador that Oman is a safe place and that the government has a firm control over its internal security and will not hesitate to respond effectively against any threat to the public order, whether fellow Ibadhis or otherwise.
BALTIMORE